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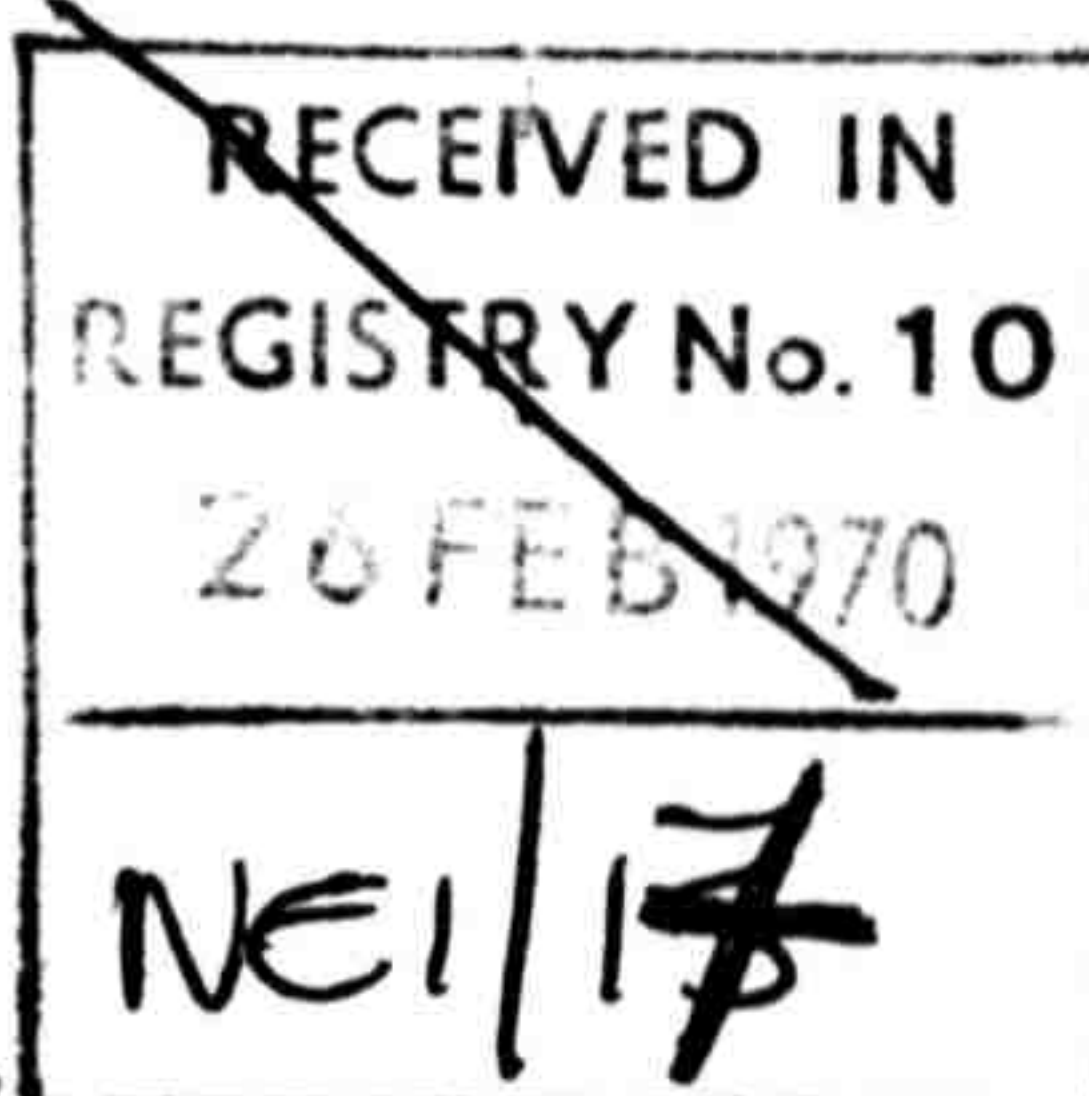
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BRITISH EMBASSY

BAGHDAD

21 February 1970.



Iraq and the Fedayeen

We have not reported on this subject since April last year (our papers have been destroyed and so unfortunately I have no reference), and the situation has changed so much that the record should now be brought up to date. At that time there were reports that Iraq was taking measures to suppress Al-Fatah and other Fedayeen organisations in Iraq in favour of their own Ba'ath dominated Arab Liberation Front (ALF). We expressed doubts about this at the time which seem to have been justified. Commando organisations are if anything even more active in Baghdad at present. The PLO Office is still functioning openly and Yassir Arafat has made several visits to Baghdad, the most recent being in early January. Two separate delegations of female members of the PFLP have visited Iraq lately and addressed public meetings in support of their cause. From time to time there are public funerals in Baghdad of "Martyrs" from various organisations. Other highlights have been a passing-out parade on 6 December of Fatah Commandos trained by the Iraqi Army, which was attended by General Hardan Tikriti, and on 2 January a rally in Baghdad addressed by General Ammash to mark the Fifth Anniversary of Al Fatah. The Commando organisations receive good publicity in the Iraqi press for their activities and press statements issued by them have been published in the Iraqi News Agency's Bulletin. However, their activities show every sign of being under firm control; few are seen in the streets of Baghdad in uniform, they are rarely seen carrying arms, and all rallies, demonstrations and funerals are under official sponsorship.

2. In contrast, the activities of the Iraqi Ba'athist ALF seem to have been in a low key; one occasionally hears of new batches of ALF commandos passing out from training camps, and their posters dominate the pavements and public buildings of Baghdad. However, there is little news of their success in action. The Ba'ath Party paper Al-Thawra claims that although ALF commandos have been killed in action it is not the policy of the organisation to issue communiqués, "out of conviction that the genuine struggle speaks for itself". However, the

/ALF has now

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ALF has now conformed to the extent of joining the Palestine Armed Struggle Command whilst retaining certain rather different qualities from those of the other Palestinian organisations. Its view of the Arab Liberation Movement is not confined in a narrow geographical sense to Palestine and it sees the Palestine liberation movement as an integral part of the movement towards Arab Unity. Thus in a statement published by Beirut's Al-Anwar the organisation attacks elements which seek to "prevent the Palestine Revolution from publicly associating with Arab Unity". In the same statement it puts itself among the more politically extreme of the commando organisations by condemning the refusal of reactionary régimes to exploit oil as a means of pressure on the West. *ms*

3. If indeed there was a genuine disposition in April last year for the Iraqis to back the ALF to the exclusion of the other commando organisations, the rapid growth in the prestige of the other organisations would alone have been enough to make the government re-examine its tactics. Although they will no doubt retain the ALF as their private resistance organisation, they are now firmly committed to support of the Fedayeen movement as a whole and came out publicly in support of the Fedayeen in Labanon last November and more recently in Jordan. However, on the side lines and in the limited context of the clash of interests between the established Arab governments and the emergent Fedayeen organisations, the régime seems to be using its influence for moderation. Thus in the Lebanese and Jordanian crises Iraqi influence seems to have been aimed at bringing about a modus vivendi, between the commando movement and host governments. At home the activities of the various Fedayeen organisations are kept firmly under control and this seems likely to continue to be the case.

Yours sincerely
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Relations Between Iraq And Arab Guerrilla Forces. Relations Between Iraq And Arab Guerrilla Forces. 21 Feb. 1970. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 17/988. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107510241/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=7abaa831&pg=1. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.